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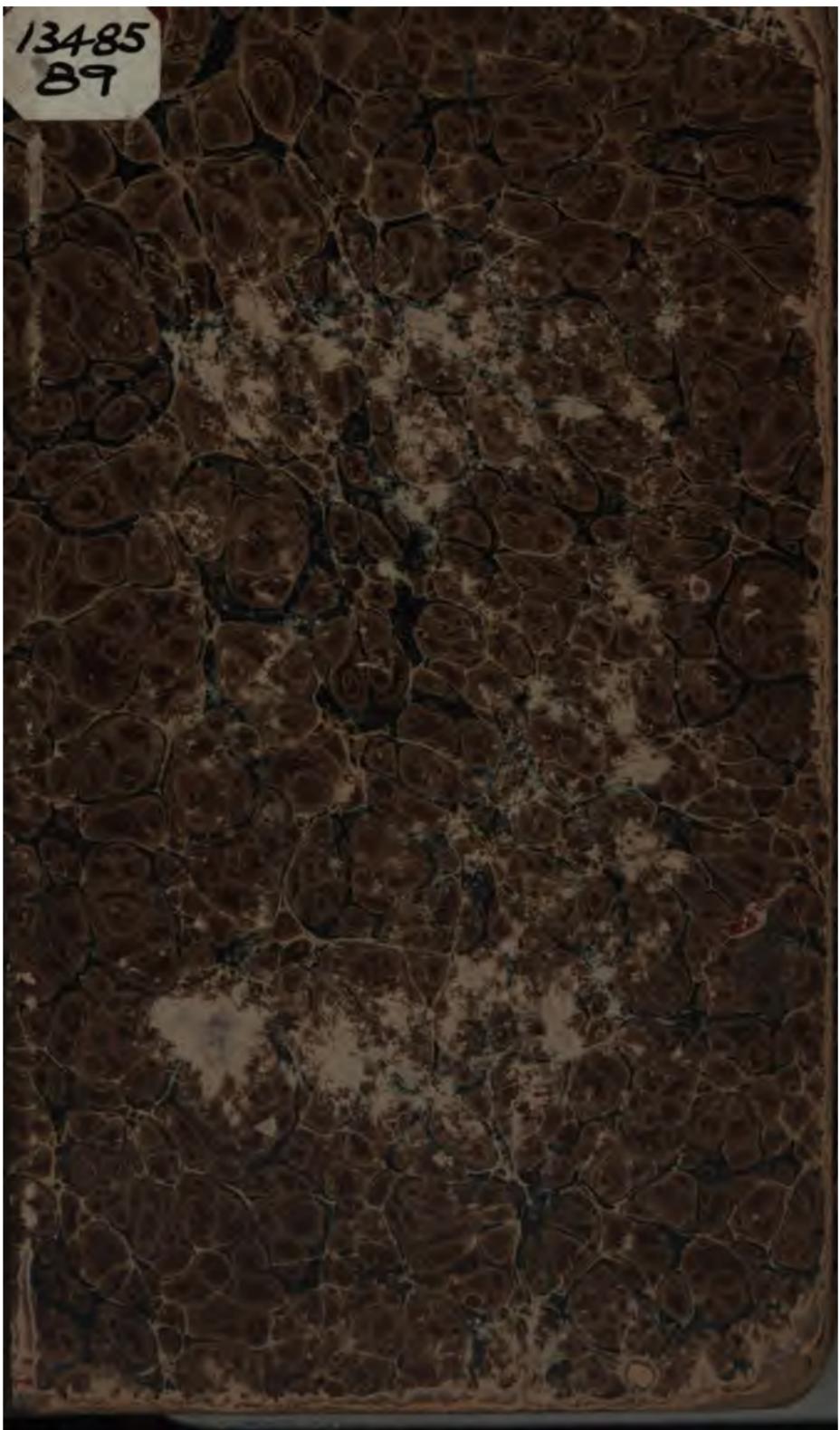
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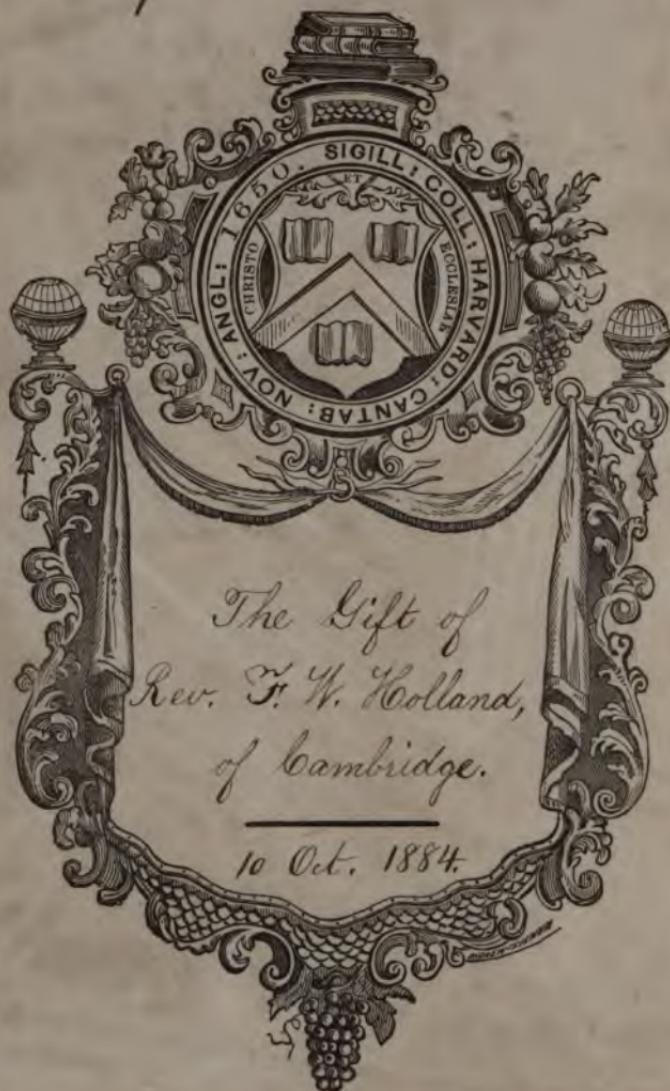
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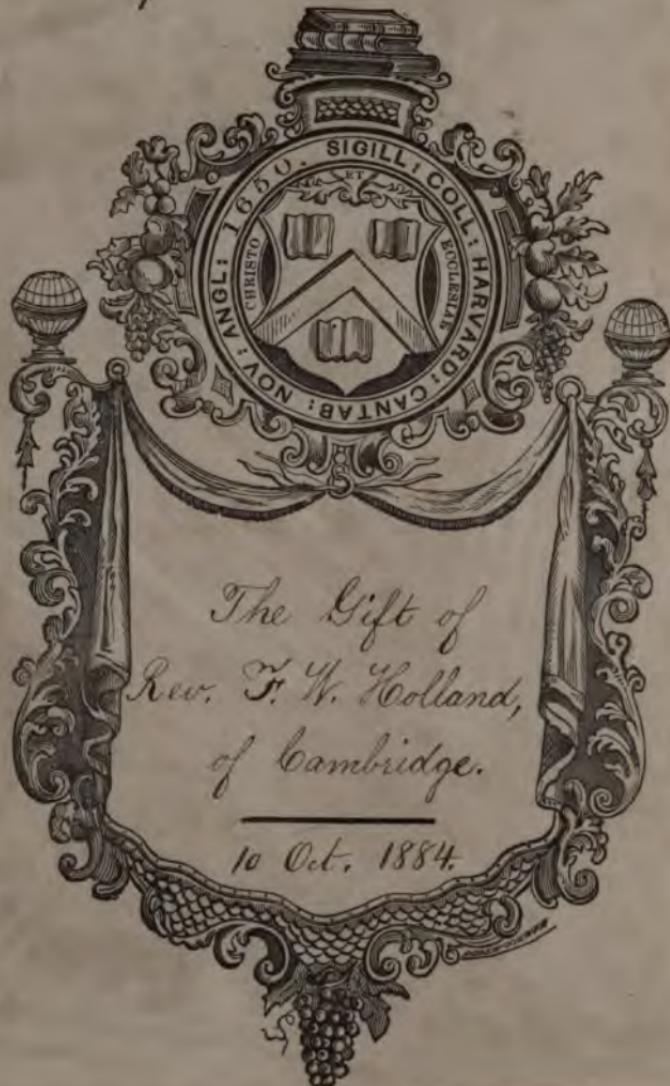
AN INTERPRETATION

OF

“KING LEAR.”

MRS. H. KATE RICHMOND-WEST.

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THE SHAKESPEAREAN WORLD.

No. II.

O

INTERPRETATION

OR

“KING LEAR.”

EDITED BY

MRS. H. KATE RICHMOND-WEST.

formerly of Cambridge.

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KING LEAR.

FROM whence comes our conviction of the force and truth of Shakespeare's tragic power? From the fact that his creations were wrought from and limited by the possibilities of the human heart.

His broadest conception, his most appalling creation, has its possibilities all within the range of humanity, and never overstrains our consciousness of truth. This becomes evident to us upon reflecting, that while under the influence of any individual character we are possessed by their condition; their joy and sorrow become ours; their sin and degradation. When we are on the heights with Hermione, when, with the consciousness of sin and grief, we walk in sleepless self accusation with Lady Macbeth, then we know that these creations lie all within the scope of nature, and every nerve and heartbeat lends itself to animate these breathless forms.

It is impossible to measure the growth of the human mind in the careful study of a tragedy, but we are sure it enlarges, infuses, strengthens every power, mental and moral, and renders us ready to do all and be all that is demanded of us, with loving heart and added courage and trust. All that outward and visible nature can combine in her fiercest battling of contending elements, the pitiless hurricane, the maddened ocean, the blinding lightning, the pelting, freezing rain; these together with the invisible forces in humanity, the possible selfishness, greed, lust, the possible virtue, loyalty, love, the inward strivings of

these elements of the soul, while allowing God's creature, to grovel in filth and slime, yet reaching up, up in an ever ascending scale, out, out of this darkness until the soul groping finds the light, all, all are combined and woven together in one stupendous creation, Shakespeare's tragedy of King Lear.

It stands in the vast field of English literature, isolated, in the perfection of its construction, as the cathedrals of Cologne and Amiens in the rich fields of architecture; a Gothic glory; the study of the ages.

To attempt to grasp at once its magnitude, its height, its depth, its almost endless variety, is a feat beyond the power of man's noblest intellect. We are at first overawed, silenced, stunned. With bowed head and hushed footstep, as into some vast cathedral, we enter the sacred portals of this immortal structure which overpowers us not more with its colossal proportions than with the immeasurable capacity of God's children for good or evil, yet at last it convinces us that the immortal soul, even as the columns, arches and cleaving spires of architectural glory, still reaches toward God.

While we are under the first impressions of the different threads, which combined form the story, we limit the tragedy by thinking of it as King Lear. But gradually, almost imperceptibly, this impression is lost, and we find ourselves haunted by its broader significance. We reflect upon the different creations, but they seem less human and more symbolical of the characteristics they portray. Lear in his weakness; Lear in his strength; Lear in his blind revolt against humanity; Lear in the midnight blackness on the lonely heath; the outward conflict of the warring elements about him unheeded in the intenser clashings of his soul in arms; Lear in his madness; Lear at last stripped and conquered, holding his Cordelia in his loving arms, singing that song of triumph, that "jubilate deo,"

which silences the trumpet's blare and all the clamor of that victory which is but mockery, symbolizes the unceasing, exhausting efforts of weary humanity to find that joy which they themselves destroy; still looking beyond, climbing steep and rugged ways; wandering through dreary, dismal wastes, seeking that which lies so close, and may be had for the asking.

Great father heart of the world! Lear's love, Lear's wrong; Lear's anguish, do they not signify the broad, rich father spirit brooding tenderly and longingly, yet blindly, and full of despair and agony over the fallen children of humanity? As we are led again and again into the mystery and depth of this tragedy of King Lear, at each new reading we follow veins of thought unnoticed before, and each soul that reads must weave from its own heart's depths the magic web about each chrysalis of thought; that thought, ripening, becomes winged, and may soar even to the infinite. But the chrysalis must ripen. Read it! know its outlines, study it, then reflect; yet read and ponder; then when you can lose yourself in its mystery and grandeur, forgetful of direction or intention, it will lend you a scope for thought as boundless as the study of creation.

We see the King at the opening of the tragedy, a coarse, self-willed, irritable old man. We see him later—the dying embers of his life by his grief and passion kindled to a flame lighting up the Lear of the past; we see his mighty love, his unquenchable spirit, and his faults are all forgotten in the breadth of his being.

The broad work of this tragedy and not this alone, but all the great artist's aim, was to arouse the human mind and free the bondaged spirit, to unfetter the wings of the imagination and spur the whole being to all that the Creator meant man should reach, when he formed him and blew into his nostrils the breath of life.

If the story were all, it were soon told. We are introduced to the court of King Lear at a moment when, perhaps for political reasons, he is lending a willing ear to the suit of the Duke of Burgundy for the hand of his youngest daughter, Cordelia.

His preference for this suit before that of the King of France is clearly shown; and it is also the time he has chosen to announce before the assembled court the division of his kingdom and the allotments already arranged between himself and his sons-in-law Albany and Cornwall.

The King, we are told, has reached that time of life when he is conscious of weakening powers, and he states himself that he wishes to see his children enjoy each her portion of his kingdom, "while we unburdened crawl toward death."

The calling upon each in turn to express the measure of their love for him is a weakness of the old King; such frailties are often found close to the most lofty virtues. The daughters Goneril and Regan were married, and their respective husbands, the Duke of Albany and the Duke of Cornwall, were present to hear the avowal before the people of the division already made in private between them. The daughters having been called upon individually to express the measure of their love, thereby limiting or increasing their respective portions, express a love so unbounded, so entire, that it is fulsome and discloses hollow hearts. When turning from them he calls upon Cordelia, for whom he expresses the most love and from whom he wishes the most, her seemingly cold answers infuriate him past all bounds. He is old and unreasonable, and his self love has been wounded before his court. We feel at first a certain discomfort that Cordelia has used so little tact in her reply to her father, but this is only the surface feeling; we have to consider her past and know what she has known. She has no cause for con-

fidence in her sisters, she does not trust them; she knows the evil in their hearts and translates these words that have pleased and deceived her poor old father; and, listening to their speeches which are but breath, she says:

“I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty
According to my bond, nor more, nor less.”

In order to understand this reply of Cordelia's we must glean from her farewell to her sisters as she leaves her father's court, her knowledge of them, and, more than that, the proof that knowledge gives us of the spaces filled with Cordelia's love — a love that has been so all-pervading that it has not only left no empty place in King Lear's heart, but has also prevented him from consciousness of absence of love in these empty-hearted daughters.

“The jewels of our father, with washed eyes
Cordelia leaves you! I know you what you are,
And like a sister, am most loath to call
Your faults as they are named. Use well our
father;
To your professed bosoms I commit him;
But yet, Alas! stood I within his grace,
I would prefer him to a better place.”

Here we are led into the past lives of these daughters; we know they have not proved in that life the love which should comfort Cordelia in her parting. From the truth of their past she gathers no consolation for their future; in that future she feels the heartbreak of her poor old father, and we see the beauty and strength of her spirit, which has so enveloped the king that the selfishness and heartless ingratitude of his elder daughters have not even touched him. It is this same power, felt, not seen, the force and the wealth of a mighty spirit, not given in words, but supplied as generously as the air we breathe — so wholly given, we forget we are recipients — which.

makes Cordelia's influence in the tragedy, and it is an immeasurable influence.

In the entire drama she speaks but a hundred lines, and yet we feel her everywhere. We think of her through all, under all, above all; she envelops the tragedy even as she envelops her father's heart. She is the light, and when dragging through the labyrinth of crime and its awful consequents, her love is the illumining torch that reveals rifts to let in heaven. In reply to her words, "I love my father according to my bond, nor more, nor less," King Lear, surprised and questioning, says:

"How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes."

Cordelia replies:

"You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I
Return those duties back, as is most fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honor you.
How have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Happily when I shall wed,
That lord who takes my hand takes half my love
and duty.
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all."

Her heart and brain are filled with the duplicity of these sisters; their want of love for their father in the past, the hollowness of their present professions, and the awful forebodings of the future press upon her. The dull old king does not feel her love and anxiety, and it is at once the virtue and the fault of her love that he does not; his pride and self love take up arms, and in joining ranks with his fitful temper trample upon his love and his reason. The full tide of his ungovernable passion sweeps through this shattered temple as an angry sea over the wreck itself has caused, and leaves him stranded upon life's shore. What he has said in his haste he clings to

convulsively, angry now because he was angry, and Cordelia is robbed of her birthright, her father's love, and her dowry, and banished from the home she has so blest.

The Earl of Kent, the noble spirit, whose love for Lear is only outdone by his love of truth and justice, tries in vain to check the angry king. Fearless in the cause of truth, he urges him to recall his rash sentence.

Kent. "Reverse thy doom,
And in thy best consideration check
This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judg-
ment,
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
Reverbs no hollowness."

This truth from the soul of Kent serves but to increase the king's anger, turning it from Cordelia upon himself.

Lear. "Kent! on thy life no more."

Kent. "My life I never held but as a pawn
To wage against thine enemies, nor fear to lose it,
Thy safety being the motive."

Kent is heroic, and from the point of his great love and devotion to the king and Cordelia, the same wellspring that gushed from Paulina's heart and made her bold, even defiant, in the cause of love and truth, in the noble drama, "A Winter's Tale," now springs anew in the heart of Kent, and bids him hurl fearlessly back to the king his angry retort upon Cordelia, and with a mighty spirit refute him word for word. As heroically he endures his banishment.

Kent. "Fare thee well, king; since thus thou wilt ap-
pear,
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here."

The scene itself is very brilliant. The king enthroned, surrounded by his court, the queenly daughters, their princely husbands, Cordelia with her impressive truth, sim-

plicity and loveliness, combine to make a whole unsurpassed in the picturesque Skakespearean world. This, together with "words that breathe and thoughts that burn," opens the tragedy with marvellous power. After Kent has left the court, the two suitors, the Duke of Burgundy and the King of France, present themselves. From the first reply of the Duke of Burgundy we are led to understand that Lear has made known to him already the dowry of Cordelia, but under these altered circumstances, "dowered with our curse and strangered with our oath," the noble duke declines the honor.

Not so the spirited King of France, who with his true heart possesses also a clear head, and questions this sudden change of feeling. This noble king speaks but four times through the entire tragedy, and all in this one scene; yet into these sentences is compressed so much of the true knight "*sans peur et sans reproche*," so much of that highest standard of manliness which belongs to all time, that we are conscious of having been allowed the companionship of a soul whom we place within our sacred circle for refreshment when the world disappoints us. It further becomes evident the Duke of Burgundy has the first claim, for the King of France, even in the rich flood of his feeling, defers to him.

France. "My Lord of Burgundy!

What say you to the lady? Love is not love
When it is mingled with respects that stand
Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her?
She is herself a dowry."

Burgundy. "Royal Lear!

Give but that portion which yourself proposed
And here I take Cordelia by the hand
Duchess of Burgundy."

Lear. "Nothing; I have sworn. I am firm."

Burgundy. "I am sorry then, you have so lost a father
That you now must lose a husband."

Now comes our one opportunity of catching the hereditary fire of Cordelia's spirit, "which gleams through the ashes of her chance."

Cordelia. "Peace be with Burgundy.

Since that respects of fortune are his love,
I shall not be his wife."

We can feel all the stir in the pulses of the spirited, chivalrous King of France, as, after listening to the weak, ignoble expression of the Duke of Burgundy, his sensitive nature catches the fire and truth of Cordelia's soul. It is all concentrated in his glowing words to her:

France. "Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor,
Most choice, forsaken, and most lov'd, despised !

Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon.

* * * * *

Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy
Shall buy this unprized precious maid of me."

We are comforted and willing to intrust Cordelia to his royal love and care. We can rejoice to think of her sharing the throne of France.

With Cordelia's banishment vanishes the sunshine of love's perfect day, and low, distant murmurings threaten a gathering tempest of cruel power, a loveless reign of hatred and malice.

Goneril and Regan, left alone, show us their secret hearts in their contempt for their father, in their cruel mention of his growing infirmities, and, further, their knowledge of each other and mutual dependence in wickedness:

"Let us hit together.

We must do something, and in the heat."

Here we leave the self-wronged king to starve for a season for that love which was all his own, but which,

through the frenzy of his anger, he has driven from his heart.

We are now to meet the Glosters, whose lives form the second, or subordinate, plot of the tragedy, the family consisting of the Earl of Gloster, Edgar, his son, and Edmund, the illegitimate. In the short introductory scene of the tragedy we find the key note of Edmund's whole mental and immoral position; and although he is a villain from the first moment to the last, his villainy does not stand level with the heartless, unprovoked villainy of an Iago, nor with the malicious wickedness of a Richard. He is the villain of mettle and brain, of physical perfection — one whose wrong received relieves him from a self-created motive for sin. Placed as he is by the accident of his birth at a point where he is forced to maintain his birthright of shame or sink in its pollution, he asserts his right to exist in the pride of his physical and mental strength, and however he may chafe at the shameless exposition of his mother's frailty, his mind is bitter not only against the wrong his father has openly done him, his son, but the ignominy cast upon his mother. This frees him at once from filial bonds and leaves him naked and alone to face facts and make the best of a position of degradation and contempt. No thinking being, taking Edmund just where he is found, can forget that before one step has been taken a softening veil of charity and tenderest pity is spread before the villainy to be, and we are made to feel compassion before we are allowed to condemn, or to see the wreck of a noble creation warped, tortured by that for which he is not wholly accountable; Gloster's coarse, degrading thought of the mother who bore Edmund; this rude withdrawal of the veil before Isis; the mystery of his birth made the subject of coarse jest and coarser laughter — all combine to distort a noble mind and destroy the possibility of a clear vision of right and wrong.

The reflections which reveal Edmund to us, in his soliloquy, Scene 2, Act I, are perfectly natural results of his efforts to find some firm standing point; thrown from the filial base, in defiance he flings himself upon the broad breast of mother nature, turning his lusty strength to profane all law, and becomes in fact a free-love philosopher and knave at once. Of course he is jealous of his brother Edgar, who by this same accident of birth claims the respect of the world; and the united forces of his being are bent to supplant Edgar in his father's love, and the rights of heritage.

A letter is artfully written by Edmund and more artfully brought to the father's notice, and, purporting to have been Edgar's work, instigates Edmund to join with him in a plot to rid themselves of the incumbrance of their old father, and then divide and enjoy his revenue. "If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue and live the beloved of your brother Edgar." Edmund's seeming love for Edgar, and reluctance to expose the son to the father, most artfully suffice to rob Gloster of all doubt, and plunge him at once to that anger and denouncement of Edgar which follows.

The old Earl, who is filled with the superstition of his time, and who is cut to the heart, at the disturbances already at court, pained by the passionate anger of Lear, the loss of Cordelia, the banishment of the "noble and true-hearted Kent," now adds to these fulfilled prophecies this last, worst sorrow, "the bond cracked between father and son;" these he attributes to the late eclipses in the sun and moon. Edmund, in his contemptuous mockery of his father's weakness, shows us the perverted mind yet noble in its possibilities.

Edmund. "This is the excellent foppery of the world; that when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeit of our own behavior, we make guilty of our disasters the sun,

the moon, the stars; as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion."

Now as we follow him in his devilish plot, as he imbues the innocent, trusting Edgar with fear and suspicion of his father, his speeches serve a double purpose, revealing Edgar's heart while they show his own:

"A credulous father, and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harm
That it suspects none! on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy! Let me if not by birth have
lands by wit,
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit."

Here we leave the Glosters in this embroiled condition to take up the action of the main plot once more. According to King Lear's own planning, Scene 1, Act I, "Ourselves by monthly course, with reservation of an hundred knights by you to be sustained, shall our abode make with you by due turns," so now we find him at the palace of his son-in-law, the Duke of Albany. From the fulsome flattery of his daughters, Goneril and Regan, in the statement of the measurement of their love for their father, and the banished Cordelia's parting words to her sisters,

"Use well our father,
To your professed bosoms I commit him
But yet alas! stood I within his grace
I would prefer him to a better place,"

we are prepared for the neglect and insult he at once receives from Goneril, whom we find instigating her steward "to a slack of former services."

"Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question;
If he dislike it, let him to my sister."

The old King returning from the hunt, comes uproariously upon the scene, and calls vociferously for his dinner; he confronts some one seeking employment in his service,

and engages in Caius the servant, the banished Earl of Kent, whose love and devotion to King Lear are but strengthened and perfected as he feels the future and the dark ways the King must tread, foredoomed from his wilful crime and self-destroyed happiness. To love and serve the King, his master, to be near him and comfort him, is the whole purpose of his disguise, and he serves him faithfully even to the bitter end. Assuming a manner brusque and bold, the King engages him; now follows such service as can be the offspring only of a pure and holy love, a love that asks nothing but the privilege of loving, no return, not even recognition. The King now inquiring for his daughter, Goneril, receives such answer from her steward, Oswald, as arouses him to the fact of the increasing carelessness of his entertainment, and we further glean the glimmerings of his own regret tinged with a something keener, as inquiring for his Fool, whom he loves tenderly, and has missed for two whole days, we feel the barbed arrow of that knight's reply as it pierces King Lear's heart:

Knight. "Since my young lady's going into France, sir,
The Fool hath much pined away."

Oh! the keen anguish of King Lear's words,
"No more of that, I have noted it well."

So little, yet so much. It tells us of long, lonely hours, of bitter, futile regret, of an agony of knowledge that has come too late; of that constant, all-pervading, all-comforting love of Cordelia in his heart and in his home; a love and love service, from its very fulness not measured as one might be that left still some places vacant; a love that has so filled his life to the very brim, that was so entwined with his own, he could realize it only by its loss. And the fool so felt its absence, "that he much pined away."

The steward of Goneril, obeying the will of his mistress,

still further insults the King, when Caius shows his wit to serve his new master; and the dauntless Earl of Kent is seen through all disguise, when he trips up the heels of the saucy steward, and punishes him for his insult to the King. Lear gratefully thanks Caius, and Kent pockets the gift of money from his royal master.

The Fool comes now upon the scene, and lends that something so pathetic, even while brimming with fun and sparkling with keenest wit, that our bright laughter is all dimmed with tears. In the overturning of Lear's outward condition as King, in the home emptied by Cordelia's banishment, the Fool is shaken from his own position and cannot find himself.

The place he has filled no longer needs him, and he too must conform to the new conditions. As is touchingly true of all comic power, it belongs in its richest veins to the most sensitive and deeply sympathetic natures, and this Fool in King Lear is a marvellous example of this highly wrought being, who with a heart of richest capacity, struggles to hide it in a flood of wit that is the thinnest sort of mask, only serving to call attention to its utter uselessness as a screen, and making more obvious his shrinking soul.

He struggles to touch the chords that shall stir the King with a consciousness of his folly; he attempts to comfort and cheer him, when that consciousness thrills to pain, the seeming diversion and levity serving still further to penetrate the heart with a sense of woe. In order to comprehend the character of the Fool, we must let our minds revert to the times, and in no wise attempt to translate him from the then to the now; when we have that retrospect he becomes to us the very essence of love and tenderness, we catch the light of his playful mirth, the shadow of his pathetic sympathy. Thus too by successive thrusts he reveals to us the cumulative woe and

bitter gnawings of ingratitude's keen tooth as it eats into the King's heart. Alas! he breathes his soul out in pathetic touches, forgetting his own grief in the general woe. One other purpose too he serves, to relieve the press of the tragedy and stay its maelstrom power. So every speech of the Fool becomes a study, and gives us by reflection the processes of King Lear's soul.

The entrance of Goneril, with face full of the annoyance she feels, is questioned by the king:

Lear. "How now, daughter, what makes that frontlet on? Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown."

Fool. "Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou had'st no need to care for her frowning. Now thou art an O, without a figure. I am better than thou art now, I am a fool, thou art nothing."

Then in reply to Goneril's frown he says:

"Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face bids me, though you say nothing.

Mum, mum, he that keeps nor crust nor crumb,
Weary of all shall want some."

How pitilessly poignant! how foreshadowing the fate of Lear! Now as the awful consciousness is forced upon the king of the black-hearted ingratitude of Goneril, and his half-formed doubts become visible truths, he bursts forth:

Lear. "Darkness and devils!

Saddle my horses, call my train together;
Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee;
Yet have I left a daughter."

The Duke of Albany enters at this moment, and the king questions him to learn if it is his will that Goneril, as his wife, has spoken. But the impetuous king, aroused to the extent of the wrong Goneril has done him, waits for no reply from Albany, but hurls this sentence at his daughter before her astonished husband:

Lear. "Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
Than the sea monster."

Albany, who does not comprehend the whole, and sees only the angry and excited king, in a gentle and dignified spirit, with a hidden force strong enough when needed, says now calmly:

Albany. "Pray, sir, be patient."

But the king's whole thought is now absorbed by his bitter knowledge, and into the contending grief and anger the sweet vision of Cordelia comes to show him the justice of this position.

Lear. "O! most small fault!

How ugly did'st thou in Cordelia show,
Which like an engine wrench'd my frame of nature
From the fixed place, drew from my heart all love,
And added to the gall. O, Lear! Lear! Lear!
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in
And thy dear judgment out."

Here he leaves them abruptly. Goneril turns to her husband.

Goneril. "Do you hear that, my lord?"

Albany, though startled at the passionate outbreak of the king, is true to himself and the facts in the case when he says:

Albany. "I cannot be so partial, Goneril,

To the great love I bear you—"

when in great impatience and rudeness she cuts his conclusions short, and through the rest of the scene we know he is struggling to open her eyes to truth and reason. To this point of the tragedy we have known but little of Albany; this short scene reveals him to us. We find a calm, rich being, swayed and illumined by the light of reason alone; a man "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." During these moments, as he stands listening to

the excited Lear, he ponders and questions; but as he questions and catches the pain and anguish of the king's heart, the torturing truth of his reproaches comes home to him, and with this poignant regret that he cannot refute the words of the king, from his heart's centre, love and truth, he speaks to Goneril. But his love, his delicacy, his truth are all wasted upon this stony ground, and in rude, disloyal impatience she cuts off his expression, and leaves him alone with his pain, the shame, and the pity of it. Nor is this all that is left to cut into Albany's heart.

Goneril. "No, no, my lord;

This milky gentleness and course of yours,
Though I condemn it not, yet under pardon
You are much more attasked for want of wisdom
Than praised for harmful mildness."

In Albany's reply there is much wisdom, and so much of truth that we are sure he is of soundest mind in spite of the slurs of his wife.

Albany. "How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell.
Striving to better, oft we mar what's well."

King Lear now sends his faithful messenger Caius to Regan, and Goneril has already sent her steward Oswald to her sister with a letter, informing her of the course she has pursued. So now they are to fulfil the agreement made in the early part of the tragedy, "Let us hit together."

The closing scene of Act I is a skeleton structure, to be clothed and warmed into life by the reader; then it takes a form of such power as our being will allow; and is what our generous hearts and warm imaginations permit it to become. The great king, shaken to the heart's centre, lost in cruel reflections, and forcing himself to believe by reiteration what his heart rebels to accept, and into this bitterness to add the last ingredient of its subtle power, comes the conviction of the wrong he has com-

mitted to Cordelia. The Fool, struggling with his own weight of woe, yet so far forgetting himself as to break the agony of his beloved master's thought with jets of wit that only serve to illumine and define the sorrow, and with this exquisite stroke of art, which knows no law but truth, brings the heart and wisdom of a fool close to the heart and folly of a king, the pulses of one beating in obedience to the emotion of the other.

Fool. "If a man's brains were in his heels, were it not in danger of kibes?"

Lear. "Ay! boy."

Lear is not there; his answer is expressive only of the distraught condition of his mind.

Fool. "Then, I prythee, be merry; thy wit shall not go slipshod."

To this the king laughs; but the fool hears only the emptiness of it, yet he keeps on. To his next bright sally he receives no notice—no answer—but from King Lear's heart come these drops of blood, "I did her wrong." To draw from the scene its subtle power we must follow the hearts of both to their most poignant grief.

We meet once more the Glosters. Edmund, the illegitimate, boldly confirms what he has plotted to the lasting injury of his brother, and still further practises upon the credulity of both. In obedience to Edmund's advice, Edgar has fled from his home, and Gloster is led to denounce his son and to proclaim him, and sends forth to apprehend him.

The messengers Oswald and Caius are sent to the Duke of Cornwall's palace, to Regan his wife—Oswald from Goneril, advising Regan of the course she has pursued in the treatment of her father; Caius bearing the message of King Lear. Caius arrives first, and while he is upon his knees, about to deliver his message, comes

Oswald, "a reeking post," who delivers to Regan Goneril's letter.

Ignoring the king's messenger, Regan reads her sister's letter, gathers her people, closes her castle gates, and commands all to follow her. Caius is constrained to attend, but feels deeply this new insult to the king, and his contempt for the servile Oswald loses nothing as he follows, who was born to lead. Arrived at the Earl of Gloster's castle, Oswald further insults him, demanding such service of Caius as tends to show his own importance, when Caius answers him, indeed, and gives him back much more than Oswald's limited brains can answer; finally, the quarrel growing hot, Caius demands of Oswald to draw; they fight, Caius, of course, getting the better of the coward. The brawl brings out the household, the Earl of Gloster, Cornwall, and Regan, and rejoicing at this new opportunity to insult the king through his messenger, Cornwall orders Caius put into the stocks. Gloster in vain urges the impropriety of the action—"stocking the king's messenger," a penalty used only for pilferers and smaller crimes—but they are obdurate, so the Earl of Kent pays this penalty for his fidelity, for his mighty love to his fallen king; and as he sits patiently in the stocks, all unmindful of himself, his words show that the fulness of his thought is for his master:

Kent. "Good king, who must approve the common saw."

He then consoles himself by taking from his pocket a letter from Cordelia, which gives him hope she will raise powers in France "seeking to give losses their remedies." With this comfort, joined to the elevation of his entire being from the loftiness of his sacrifice, he resigns himself to slumber and forgetfulness:

Kent. "All weary, and o'erwatched,

Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold

This shameful lodging.

Fortune, good night; smile once more; turn thy wheel."

What we have seen thus far of this kingly spirit, awakens our faith in life, its divine source, its god-like possibilities. It refreshes us, and we are strengthened "that such us these have lived and died." It bids us recognize the power of the invisible spirit to overtop all position, all circumstance, to keep the house within, the holy of holies untouched, unstained, remote from all outward conditions; it helps us to bear more patiently; it fills our minds with food celestial; it builds adamantine walls about the spirit, fortifying it against all foes without.

We now have a glimpse of the hunted and wronged Edgar, who hearing himself proclaimed, and knowing there was no security for him within the kingdom, and yet unwilling to leave unfollowed the course of events, now disguises himself in the savage semblance of a Bedlamite beggar, that so he may in disguise lurk in the neighborhood and unfold to himself the mystery of his condition, and the reason for his father's course. This form of Bedlamite beggar was common in those days; the wanderer assuming a sort of madness and sorcerer's power, thus imposing upon the credulity of the common people:

"Poor Turlygood! poor Tom! that's something yet, Edgar I nothing am."

King Lear, having waited in vain for the return of his messenger, sets out for his daughter Regan's castle. Arriving there and finding it closed, he continues to the castle of the Earl of Gloster; on his arrival great is his wonder and surprise at finding Caius, his faithful messenger, stocked; that surprise turns to indignation, when he learns it is the work of his son and daughter.

The insult touches him deeply, he cannot believe it:

Lear. "They durst not do't.

They could not, would not do't. 'Tis worse than
murder

To do upon respect such violent outrage."

Now comes the wisdom of the Fool; not only is he revealed to us all tenderness and tears, but from his lips comes much wisdom; his words are barbed arrows to the King, and still they send a shot whizzing through the spaces, striking left and right from that day of the tragedy's birth, to all time to come still slaughtering the Philistines:

Fool. "Winter's not gone yet,
If the wild geese fly that way;
Fathers that wear rags
Do make their children blind;
But fathers that bear bags
Shall see their children kind."

King Lear, having found the host, the Earl of Gloster, demands to see his daughter Regan, and his son-in-law, the Duke of Cornwall. The Earl tenders their excuses, "they are sick, they are weary,"

Lear. "Mere fetches,
The images of revolt and flying off.
Fetch me a better answer."

The words of Gloster fall as oil to flame:

Gloster. "My dear lord,
You know the fiery quality of the Duke,
How irremovable and fixed he is
In his own course."

This provokes a retort from the old King, a torrent of excited feeling; but that sweet spirit that abides ever with him wells to the top to calm his anger, and bids him consider:

"Infirmitiy doth still neglect all office,
Whereto our health is bound. We are not ourselves,

**When nature, being oppressed, commands the mind
To suffer with the body. I'll forbear."**

Then, turning, he looks once more upon Caius, who proves from his degraded position the direct insult to him, and in righteous wrath, he cries,

"Bid them come forth and hear me,
Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum
Till it cry, sleep to death."

Gloster delivers the mandate of the King, and the Duke of Cornwall and Regan obey the summons. With clinging love Lear forgets for the moment all, appeals to Regan's heart and pours out his wrongs to this daughter; his soul is so flooded by the remembrance of Goneril's wickedness, that he does not see that Regan reflects her sister; but while he is speaking the loud-sounding trumpet announces her, and as she boldly enters, and Regan takes her by the hand, reflecting in her every word the sister-heart, we feel the truth of the artist's meaning, who gives to two corporate bodies but one heart, one brain, with two poisoned tongues to keep the echoes ringing of this blackest sin, ingratitude.

Regan. "If you will come to me
(For now I spy a danger), I entreat you
To bring but five and twenty; to no more
Will I give place or notice."

Lear. "I gave you all."

Regan. "And in good time you gave it."

With this strife of his nature, the pain and heartbreak and that conscience which evermore holds before him his banished Cordelia, the want of whose tender love has revealed the space she filled, even to the submerging these wicked spirits in its beauty and fulness, so that through all these years, he has known them not; with all this forced upon him and topping his anger, no home open to him, no heart to which he can turn for love and com-

fort, he calls to horse and goes forth into the night and storm. Gloster, the host, rebels at his situation, but the Duke of Cornwall and Regan have taken possession of his castle, his rights of hospitality are wrested from him, and he can only submit. But he pleads for his King:

Gloster. "Alack ! the night comes on, and the bleak winds

Do sorely ruffle. For miles about
There's scarce a bush."

Gloster's words avail nothing, he is silenced and the castle gates are closed. Forced into the night and storm the old King wanders, broken-hearted, houseless, stripped at once of both kingly dignity and fatherly rights. Fit that a storm of passion so great should abjure all roofs and find no limit, but the plain and the dome of heaven. This desolation within and without, the lonely soul torn from its hold upon humanity; the wealth of love bestowed for years thrown back in cruelty and anguish; this dreary waste with its hell-black night; these are the soul's bewilderment and groping in life's pathless spaces; the tempest without one with the tempest within, the reverberating thunder echoing again and yet again, reflect the disturbed forces of his soul; the wail of the pitiless whirlwind is one with the voice of his despair.

While Kent (Caius) is searching for his King in the night and storm, he meets a gentleman of the court, with whom he trusts letters to Cordelia conveying the knowledge of all proceedings since her banishment, and asking aid of France in behalf of her father. Kent finds the King, storm-beaten, woe-worn, but, excited by the jarring elements, his words seem woven from the fibres of the storm. With all the rich effects possible to produce in our best theatres of to-day, King Lear must ever lose in the limitations of a scene. For such passion no roof but "heaven's vault," no boundary but the horizon's rim. The

thoughtful student of this tragedy must find his highest satisfaction alone with the mighty artist, whose power transports us at will to court or dreary wilderness:

Lear. "Blow winds, and crack your cheeks, Rage, blow,
 * * * * * * *

And thou all shaking thunder
 Strike flat the thick rotundity of the world !
 Crack nature's moulds; all germens spill at once
 That make ingrateful man !

In vain the efforts of the Fool to distract now his master's devouring sorrow; his sallies of wit, that formerly were feather-tipped arrows, cleaving the air and true to their aim, fall now with a dull and leaden weight, unnoticed save as they hit home, piercing the Fool's own heart:

Lear. "Rumble thy bellyfull. Spit fire ! Spout rain !
 Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters.
 But yet I call you servile ministers
 That have with two pernicious daughters joined
 Your high engendered battles 'gainst a head
 So old and white as this. O ! O ! 'tis foul !"

At last, urged by the devoted Caius and exhausted physically, he enters the wretched hovel, with one last thought for the heart-broken jester:

Lear. "Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart,
 That's sorry yet for thee."

In the Fool's reply are compressed all the cruel chances and changes, all the patience and forbearance life has taught him by cruel lessons. The heart of this jester is as many-toned as a harp with a thousand strings:

Fool. "He that hath a little tiny wit,
 With heigh ho! the wind and the rain,
 Must make content with his fortunes fit,
 For the rain, it raineth every day."

In the next scene, the simple-hearted, loyal Gloster is

pouring out to Edmund his grievous wrongs; as host his rights have been withheld him, even his sympathy denied the King; in his grief and indignation he discloses to Edmund his receipt of a letter assuring him the wrongs of Lear would yet be "revenged home."

Edmund, still practicing upon the credulity of his father, lends an attentive ear, yet subtly determines to carry the complaints and information to the Duke of Cornwall, he being now the acknowledged leader, mention having been already made of division between the Dukes, and Edmund's closing sentence gives us his whole incentive to action from the first:

Edmund. "The younger rises, when the old doth fall."

Again we meet the houseless king and his faithful Caius and fool, who insist upon the exhausted king's taking refuge in the wretched hovel, the only possible shelter. In the first outpourings of his anguish Lear fills the limitless spaces with himself, and while wrestling with the horrible consciousness of his nature wronged and made desolate by his own flesh and blood, draws into the awful conflict the warring elements "that have with two pernicious daughters joined your high engendered battles 'gainst a head so old and white as this." The first paroxysm passed, the broad, rich nature triumphs, and he regains his equipoise; his nature, so generous even through the bitterness of his heart anguish, the pangs of his tried endurance, reaches out beyond himself to a world of sufferers and wretched ones:

" You houseless poverty,
 Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are
 That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
 How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
 Your looped and windowed raggedness defend you
 From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
 Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;

**Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel;
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just."**

From this point of the triumph of his generosity, his love for humanity, he leaves farther and farther behind him his personal grief, or, rather, he merges it into a sea as broad as sweeps around the suffering world. Entering the wretched hovel to find shelter and comfort, he confronts the outlawed, naked Edgar, whose condition so pitiful appeals at once to Lear's tender sensibility, and holds him still farther from his personal woe. Edgar's complaints are the varied tones of the storm-wind, and can be heard in every blast that blows.

Edgar. "Away, the foul fiend follows me;
Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.
Humph! go to thy cold bed and warm thee."

In Edgar's condition the king can see only ingratitude's keen tooth:

"Nothing could have subdued nature
To such lowness but his unkind daughters."

Still further the Bedlamite beggar lends to the king's distracted brain a focus for his thought, and his reasoning powers are set at work to relieve the fiercer strain of the emotions:

Lear. "Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more but this? Consider him well. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings. Come, unbutton here."

Here the mighty nature, reeling, heart-torn, brain-tossed, storm-racked, yields at last and sinks into a sleep, a slumber that serves still further to exhaust nature's forces.

Gloster, the host, cannot rest until the king is borne

into more decent shelter, and risks his life to bid Caius and the fool bear him to his hospitable farm-house. Thither they convey him while he sleeps. From the troubled sea of that short slumber Lear rouses, but his reason is dethroned, and from the trembling ruins the jewels of his thought, upturned, are flung broadcast, flashing out their lights to a pitying world. Edgar weeps tears of anguish over Lear, and his pent torture finds vent in these words:

Edgar. “My tears begin to take his part so much
They'll mar my counterfeiting.”

But Lear's loving heart, his breaking heart, lies all unveiled before us, and we stay our falling tears while we follow King Lear's thought, as in utter homelessness and desolation this complaint overwhelms us with its woe :

“The little dogs and all,

Tray, Blanche and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me.”

The watchful Caius urges his master to rest, and Lear, folding to his heart his grief, and ceasing to question, obeys :

Lear. “Make no noise, make no noise, draw the curtains; so, so, so—We'll go to supper in the morning; so, so, so.”

But the poor Fool has spent his last jest, and now, worn out with his tender sympathy, “goes to bed at noon.”

The ever anxious Gloster now brings word of a further plot against the king's life, and urges his removal to Dover, where the hosts of France are gathered, and where he is sure of welcome and protection. Thither the worn king is borne. For his loyalty the good earl pays most dearly; it costs him his eyes. The party within the castle, Cornwall, Regan, Edmund and Goneril, knowing of Gloster's devotion to the king and of the letter he has secretly received giving assurance of aid from the French powers, send servants at once to apprehend him:

Regan. "Hang him instantly."

Goneril. "Pluck out his eyes."

Edmund, the traitor, is dispatched with Goneril to the Duke of Albany, Cornwall suggesting to him that the revenges about to be visited upon his father "are not fit for your beholding."

Gloster is dragged in by the servants, his arms pinioned, and then bound to a chair. Here Regan plucks his beard:

Gloster. "By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done

To pluck me by the beard."

Regan. "So white, and such a traitor!"

Gloster. "Naughty lady,

These hairs which thou hast ravished from my chin
Will quicken and accuse thee."

The poor old earl, whose trusting nature has brought him to this condition, "now tied to the stake," "stands his course," and answers boldly the questions why the king was sent to Dover:

Gloster. "Because I would not see thy cruel nails

Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.

* * * * *

But I shall see

The winged vengeance overtake such children."

Cornwall. "See it shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair,

Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot."

Instinctively we shudder and turn our faces from the hideous torture.

Gloster. "He that will think to live till he be old,

Give me some help. O, cruel! O, ye gods!!"

His cry of anguish is not unheeded. One of the servants, forgetting in the horror of the deed all conditions save manhood and honor, bids Cornwall "hold!" The duke draws upon him and is fatally wounded, whereupon

Regan stabs the servant. Gloster, in physical anguish, calls for his son Edmund, when Regan makes known to him the heartbreak that awaits him in the knowledge of Edmund's treachery. Oh, most bitter anguish of the soul that can swallow up the mortal pain !

Gloster. "O, my follies ! Then Edgar was abused —

Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him."

Regan. "Go, thrust him out at gate, and let him smell His way to Dover."

Here he is thrust from the gates of his own castle with bleeding, eyeless sockets, to "smell his way to Dover."

In these stony-hearted sisters there is no pulsation for good, no motion but for evil. From the first to the last they remain fixed in their wickedness, immovable, unalterable, except for developed crime. Each other being of the tragedy who labors with a weight of sin, and gropes in the darkness of its night, yet gives some token of a soul beneath, of an origin divine, and shows a gleam, however remote, of possible virtue.

Edmund, the false-hearted, subtle traitor, with his latest breath cries out:

"I pant for life; some good I mean to do
Despite of mine own nature."

Gloster, in his folly and frailty, shows a mighty trust, a loyal, loving spirit, a tender pity and a breadth of being that allows him to see himself and acknowledge bravely the consequents deserved. But for this awful crime of ingratitude Shakespeare knows neither repentance nor forgiveness. He separates the wretches from all possible good, plunging them still deeper and deeper into crime, then hurls them from the brink into the awful everlasting without one prayer or tear.

Again we are on the heath, and the wandering Edgar, outcast and beggar, comes to us bringing the wisdom and strength wrought from his iron circumstances. His virtue

is ingrained, proof against wind or weather. There is a hardy endurance and acceptance of his position which savors of the heroic when he says:

“ Yet better thus, and known to be contemned,
Than still contemned and flattered.”

Then seeing his father, poorly led, with eyeless, bleeding rings, his heart breaks forth in words which show that the moment has come to test the strength of his philosophy, suffering-wrought though it be:

Edgar. “ World, world, O, world !

But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,
Life would not yield to age.”

In the development of the tragedy thus far there has been no suggestion so full of woe, so replete with the bitterness of that retrospection which reveals remorse, as speaks from Gloster's lips in reply to the old man who would lead him:

Old Man. “ Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.”

Gloster. “ I have no way, and therefore need no eyes.

I stumbled when I saw.”

There is in all the tragedy no “ Via Dolorosa ” to compare with the path the old Earl treads alone in this moment of his acknowledged blindness of soul brought so consciously to him through his physical blindness. The physical blindness and pain are forgotten in that mental darkness, which allowed him to stumble and grope in the rich fulness of his perfect vision. His patience and fortitude, his forbearance and resolution, his love for the wronged Edgar welling above his own flood of woe, give us a nature rare and sweet, strong and charitable, and he too lifts himself above the errors of his life, and shows us the clear ways of God:

Gloster. “ Ah, dear son Edgar.

The food of thy abused father's wrath !

Might I but live to see thee in my touch
 I'd say I had eyes again."

Put yourself, reader, thinker, into the son's place as he stands before his father; the father who has wronged him forgotten in the father who suffers; his own strange disguise heightening the scene, and by its distance from his personality as Edgar, adding that something to the struggle between the son and the beggar, which enters keenly our consciousness but baffles word painting. We can but imagine his agonized thought as he hears his father's loving words,

"Might I but live to see thee in my touch
 I'd say I had eyes again."

Here Edgar is forced to retreat into the beggar; the color of his words reveals his bleeding heart:

Edgar [aside]. ("Bad is the trade must play the fool to sorrow,

Angering itself and others.) Bless thee, master!
 Poor Tom's a cold. [Aside.] (I cannot daub it further.")

Gloster further entreats the beggar to lead him to Dover.
Gloster. "There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
 Looks fearfully in the confined deep;
 Lead me but to the brim of it,
 From thence I shall no leading need."

And with this purpose of self destruction in his soul he is led toward Dover by his conscious son. While these events have been pushed by the Duke of Cornwall and Regan, Edmund (now Earl of Gloster), and Goneril, the Duke of Albany has come to a clearer insight into the heart of his wife, and to a sense of the false position of things altogether. Goneril now comes, accompanied by Edmund, to stir Albany to action, when Albany seizes the occasion to unfold his thought. From the depth of his emotion and his scathing denunciation of his wife,

O Goneril !

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
Blows in your face; ”

From his tender appreciation of the old King:

“Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed !
A father, and a gracious aged man
Whose reverence the head-lugged bear would lick,
Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you mad-
ded; ”

From his honor and tender pity for Gloster, expressed
in these words:

“Gloster, I live
To thank thee for the love thou show’dst the King,
And to revenge thine eyes,”

We have sufficient ground upon which to build the strong
character of Albany.

The messenger who brings to Albany the news of the treatment of Gloster also brings to Goneril a letter from Regan, and reading it, Goneril speaks of her hopes and fears in relation to Edmund, Earl of Gloster, which are growths from the poisoned soil, and, hideous as they are to contemplate, have a purpose broad and deep—as deep as the soul and broad as humanity’s reach of crime. It is one part of the Shakespearean plan to show ingratitude the most prolific soil for crime, from which base the growth of unlooked for varieties is sure. This is forced upon us, and from a doubt becomes conviction, as we reflect still further that lest the truth might escape us, the mighty master has presented it to us double, both sisters plunging into the same crime, the fruit of the same soil.

From this sin and darkness, how we welcome the light and love of Cordelia’s heart as it shines upon us and blesses us, even from another’s lips. We are in the French camp near Dover, we are in the presence of the good Earl of Kent; still disguised as Caius, he is talking to the friendly

gentleman whom he dispatched to Cordelia. Listen to his words! They flood us with the sunshine of Cordelia's loving spirit; they quench with holy tears the incendiary brands held by Regan and Goneril at the foundations of home, filial love, and wifely honor; they restore the sickened thought to healthy action, and again we see the powers of Satan fleeing before one angel of the Lord:

Gent. "Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of
‘father’

Pantingly forth, as if it pressed her heart;
Cried, ‘sisters! sisters! shame of ladies! sisters!
Kent! father! sisters! What? i’ the storm? i’ the
night?

Let pity not be believed.’ There she shook
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
And clamor moistened; then away she started
To deal with grief alone.”

But Cordelia in person is with us once more, and her love is the strong confidence we lean upon, stronger than all the forces of the French army she leads:

Cordelia. “No blown ambition doth our arms incite
But love, dear love, and our ag’d father’s rights.
Soon may I hear and see him.”

Cordelia’s messengers are sent to seek her wandering father, and we feel already sure rest for the weary heart is near.

Goneril’s steward, bearing a letter from his mistress to Edmund, Earl of Gloster, is promised preferment if he shall cut off the blind traitor Gloster. The steward promises if he meets him to show “what party he does follow.”

Again we walk with Gloster and Edgar up and up the rough steep whose top is self destruction. Like shadows we follow these breathing forms, and we feel the strain of the reach they climb. O, wonderful power of

language, that forces us to believe what merely seems, and pant for breath upon this level surface. Alas ! Alas ! a rugged, toilsome way has led poor Gloster to these heights of woe. Edgar, whose love and care surround his father, "trifles with his despair only to cure it," leads Gloster to think he stands within a foot of the extreme verge. Gloster, alone in his anguish, pours out his resolution to end all rather than bearing longer, "fall to quarrel with your great opposeless wills." If we have followed him in his distress for his King, his grief "that the bond was cracked between father and son," his agony of mind, a painful, awful illumination within as the last ray broke on his outward vision, and his poignant physical suffering was forgotten in the flood of his soul's regret, and the longing, "only to live that he might see Edgar in his touch," we have made ourselves ready to climb the weary heights that have led to this Gethsemane.

Gloster. "O you mighty gods !

This world I do renounce; and in your sights
Shake patiently my great affliction off."

Here he leaps and falls along. Edgar rushes to him, lest in his intense desire to end his life, life might yield to the theft. From this bourne, the very brink of death, he is snatched, and all his despair is garnered in the first words from his lips, "Away, and let me die." Edgar further reassures his father, "that the dearest gods, who make themselves honors of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee."

Gloster. "I do remember now! henceforth I'll bear
Affliction till it do cry out itself
Enough, enough, and die."

This mighty resolve shows us the soul's triumphant power and pleads for the hunted ones of earth, to wait upon God's will, "like angels, trumpet-tongued, against the deep damnation of (such) taking off."

The maddened Lear enters here upon the scene, fantastically dressed with flowers, and in his ravings the possible Lear of the past in many forms comes before us. This resurgence of his dying life power shows us the grand elements which combined made his being, for even unstrung and thrown off in these ravings of lunacy, they show a coherence and brilliancy, a scope of wisdom, philosophy, and moral power for a world's marvel, and uplift humanity to the level of the gods. The listening Edgar sums it all when he says,

“O matter and impertinency mixed,
Reason, in madness !

The attendants sent by Cordelia to seek her father, come upon him here, and laying their hands upon him, bid him follow :

“Sir, your most dear daughter.”

Who can translate for another the tender pathos of Lear's reply ?—

“No rescue? What, a prisoner! I am even
The natural fool of fortune. Use me well;
You shall have ransom. Let me have a surgeon,
I am cut to the brains.”

It enters our consciousness, and our hearts receive a wound, but from the thought that follows the fountains are stirred and our tears fall for every sacred word:

“Why, this would make a man, a man of salt,
To use his eyes for garden water-pots!
Ay! and for laying Autumn's dust.”

Oswald, steward to Goneril, who was promised promotion if he should slay the traitor Gloster, rushes upon him, with drawn sword:

“Thou old, unhappy traitor,
Briefly thyself remember; the sword is out
That must destroy thee.”

The patient Gloster, whose last prayer was that the

gods would themselves release him, accepts this threat as a boon, an answer to his petition:

Gloster. "Now let thy friendly hand
Put strength enough to it."

Edgar, all this while in the dress of the peasant, fearing lest Oswald should recognize his voice or manner, assumes a broken phrase, and protects his father, fighting with the miserable Oswald, whom he slays. Edgar's words over the steward prove to us the purpose and method of Edgar's course in assuming the disguise of the Bedlamite beggar, and still keeping close to the centre of action. Nothing has escaped him, he knows the dastardly servant, he knows the wicked Goneril.

Edgar. "I know thee well, a serviceable villain,
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire."

The letter found upon the body of the steward discloses Goneril's plot against the life of her husband Albany, and her passion for Edmund, Earl of Gloster. All this Edgar holds watchfully for the promised hour.

That Gloster's sufferings form the climax of the tragedy, I am fully persuaded. That soul who from such a Golgotha has forced upon his keen sensibility such a base for his despair as conscious crime, who through wrong, cruel abuse and keen physical anguish, yet holds the mental vigor to measure the height and depth of his transgression and his woe, whose brain, refusing relief from the terrible strain by any waste or weakening of its mighty fires, burns with a clearer, steadier flame until it flickers low in death, is at the top possibility of suffering and lifted out of reach of Lear. Lear committed a folly, and was cruelly wronged; we follow him with bleeding hearts and tearful eyes. We would not lose one word from his rich heart centre; his ravings are the golden settings for the priceless jewels of his thought; his

awakening from this madness to the healing balm of Cordelia's love is sweet, as forgiveness; his imprisonment with the sacred daughter love, his triumph and glory. But for poor Gloster, there is nor refuge nor triumph; he drags the awful consciousness of crime over the gulf of such despair as bids him seek the refuge of the grave; this is denied him; with growing mental power he bears his cross and with a holy patience struggles on. The knowledge of Lear's madness comes to his enduring brain as a refuge and rest denied him.

Gloster. "The King is mad; how stiff is my vile sense,
 That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling
 Of my huge sorrows. Better I were distract.
 So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,
 And woes, by wrong imaginations lose
 The knowledge of themselves."

Not the reverberating thunder of Lear's woe, his prolonged, despairing cry borne by all the winds of heaven, can silence the voice of conscience as it speaks to us from the stricken lips of Gloster. Self accusation, self condemnation, self forgetfulness and love pure and true form his whole. He has no word of reproach for Edmund in that awful hour when the truth is brought home to him, and mighty the moral force conquering the body's suffering as he cries:

Gloster. "O my follies! then Edgar was abused;
 Kind gods, forgive me this, and succor him."

Edgar now comes to Albany bearing the letter found upon the steward Oswald, the letter from Goneril to Edmund, plotting against Albany's honor and life:

Edgar. "Before you fight the battle ope this letter;
 If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
 For him that brought it."

How all this pain and darkness of crime flies before the light and warmth of Cordelia's presence. Her first words

are an "exorcise te," to all offending spirits and conditions, her utterance is the healthful cure-all of earthly ill:

"O, thou good Kent. How shall I live and work
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
And every measure fail me."

We may enter here and stand with the dear time-tried Kent, we may draw deep breaths of happiness, and touching but her garments' hem feel our wounded spirits made whole—but who shall so stand, close to the dear Cordelia as she bends over her cherished father, while hopes and fears and tenderest sympathy melt and commingle in a filial perfection that might be the fountain head of daughterly love to feed forever the hungry father heart of the world—let them have hands not clean, hearts not pure, though they be sin-dyed scarlet-red, this pure fountain shall make them clean, Aye! wash them white as wool.

Cordelia. "Had you not been their father
These white hairs had challenged pity of them.
Was this a face to be exposed to the warring
winds?
. To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder
To watch (poor perdu) with this thin helm?
Mine enemy's dog — tho' he had bit me — should
have stood
That night against my fire,
And wast thou fain, poor father, to hovel thee
With swine and rogues forlorn in short and musty
straw?
Alack! Alack! 'tis wonder that thy life and wits at
once
Had not concluded all."

Each word is sacred. We see all clearer now; the long dark way is all illumed by holy love, and God's how and why become plainer to us; each individual cross is lifted,

and with new courage and fortitude we tread our way, for we are sure that "God is love."

Now comes on the battle. The trumpets sound, the drums roll out the call to arms, and colors and marching hosts and trampling horse bring all too near the thick of the conflict. Edgar has sheltered his father, but seeing Lear is overcome, the King and Cordelia prisoners, removes him to a place of safety:

"Away, old man, give me thy hand, away."

Gloster. "No further, sir; a man may rot, even here.

Edgar. "What, in ill thoughts again? We must endure
Our going hence e'en as our coming hither,
Ripeness is all."

Gloster. "And that's true, too."

Again his spirit is borne aloft by the strong-souled son.

The closing scene, with its mockery of conquest, with its drums sounding and colors flaunting abroad its hollowness and deceit, with all its triumph and victor newly crowned in his fire-new fortunes, cannot touch one sympathetic note within us; our thoughts and prayers are centred upon the prisoners who follow: Is it the lament of the conquered that deadens the clang of the trumpet? Is it the wail of despair that silences the din of the rolling drums? Listen, O soul, to the great harmony, and resolve each chord. It is the hallelujah of an enfranchised spirit! This mighty nature concentrating in its heart's centre parental love, imperishable, unconquerable, though torn by anguish, anger, weakness and madness, triumphs at last over the visible enemy, as folding Cordelia to his heart and leading the way to their imprisonment he pours out in notes of joy the Kyrie Eleison of his soul. Lend thine ear:

Lear. "Come, let's away to prison!

We two will sing like birds i' the cage.

When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
 And ask of thee forgiveness.
 So well talk and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
 Talk of court news — Who's in? Who's out? —
 And take upon us the mystery of things,
 As tho' we were God's spies; and we'll wear out
 In a walled prison pacts and sects of great ones,
 That ebb and flow by the moon.

* * * * *

Have I caught thee?

He that parts us must bring a brand from heaven
 And fire us hence like foxes,
 The goujeere shall devour them flesh and fell,
 Ere they shall make me weep." —

Catch the sounding chords. The long agony and heart-rending lend each a tone; bitter humiliation of the spirit and futile regret, yet another; the folding close to his heart the love for which he has so yearned, is the rich swelling harmony made up of these varied tones, that roll on and on, and still reverberate through the spaces—a soul has triumphed!—sound it out to the listening world!

True to the poisoned soil are the rank weeds that thrive and flaunt their noxious blooms to stay the conquerer's glances; true to the soil, the malice, hatred and jealous fear of each sister heart for the other; meet the awful end, "The judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble, touches us not with pity." It is a part of the Shakespearean method to portray, not to conclude; and by this course so broad and free the highest possible good is attained, each individual mind is filled with electric thought and compelled to keenest reflection. What concludes the awful lesson of this portrayal of ingratitude? This monster so hideous in one outline, yet for stronger emphasis drawn double, is now hurled double into the chasm of oblivion—

for this crime is no forgiveness, no repentance. "Cover their faces."

Now, in the person of the self-contained, lofty-minded Edgar, right bids defiance to might in the person of the perfidious, newly crowned conqueror Edmund. The strength of Edgar's spirit has been wrought out of the hardness of his circumstances, with truth and nobility for the heart kernels of his nature. The silence of that withdrawal into the inner temple of his soul where in seclusion he looks out from the holy within, speaks now in clarion tones his long-stayed judgment, and gives us the evidence conclusive of the clear mental process that has heard and seen and balanced all. Thus Edgar stands revealed; the mists and doubts of parental blindness are rolled away, and the fatal blow is given to falsehood.

Edmund, wounded unto death, cries out,
"I pant for life — some good I mean to do
Despite of mine own nature."

For him is repentance and forgiveness, now, and tender pity from the first.

Gloster, too, is at peace, when "having lived to see Edgar in his touch" in a frenzy of joy and grief "his flawed heart bursts smilingly." Yes! at peace; the fruit of his self resignation, patience and lowness of spirit.

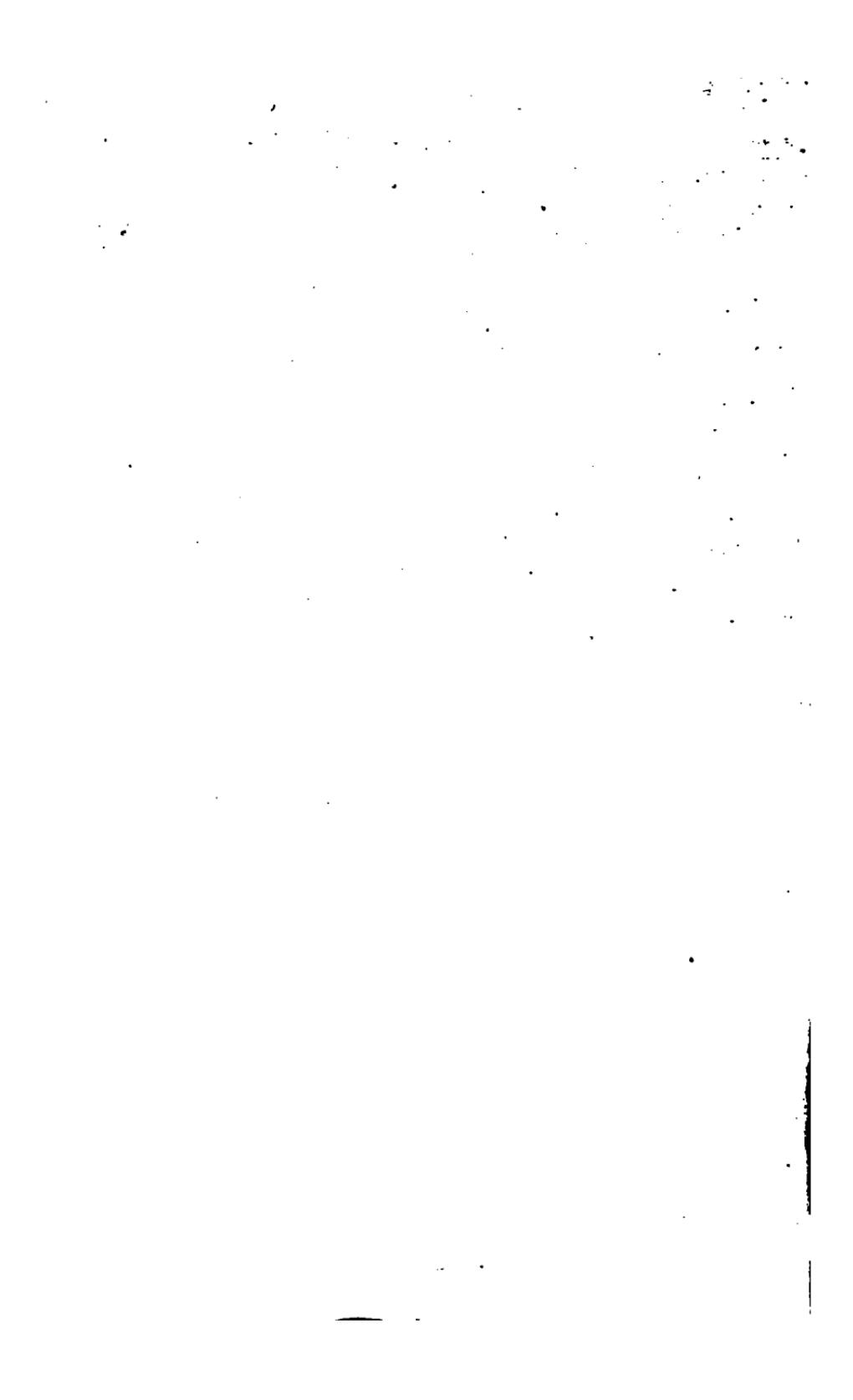
"He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted."

That Lear's triumph is short-lived, makes it no less a triumph. The heart has sung its jubilant song; and we know that the last deep wail, the "howl! howl! howl!" is for the precious joy new lost. Not as before, lost in the blindness of ignorance, but lost now in the fulness of knowledge and possession. Lost—as the inevitable; lost—beyond our love and longing; lost—to the hushing of our hearts, and the mute despair of folded hands. Lost? or only leading the mighty soul to follow, from whence we would not "upon the rack of this tough world

stretch it out longer." Lost!—but with that sense of having possessed, which is the benediction death leaves to soften while it heightens regret.

The hell-black night is passed; the raging storm has spent its fury; the reverberating thunder in fainting peals dies on the listening ear. Through the lifting, misty rain the conquering sunshine throws its rainbow light. Through the floating, fleecy clouds we see the eternal blue.

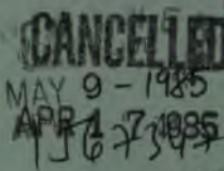
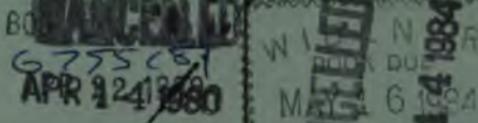
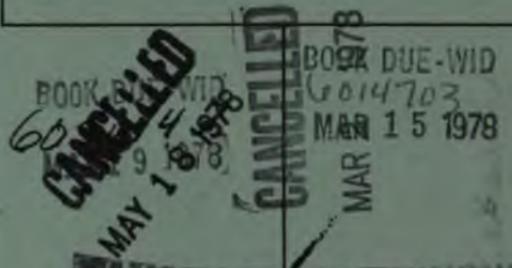
Did the thunder bear to us in its reverberations the despair of a great father heart? They sounded the depths of a father's woe. Did the freezing, pelting rain sting with every falling drop, and quicken our deadened sensibilities? They were parental tears. Did the lightning flashes illumine the darkness and show us in quick gleams love's wandering and despair? They were electric flashes from the tender-hearted Fool, showing to bewildered love the places love left vacant. Did your listening ear catch the sad music of the night wind, as it moaned and wailed out Edgar's sorrow? It was the mournful cry of the loving child heart, repressed, thrown back upon itself, in solitude to suffer and to bleed. Do you see those lightning-rent and charred ruins of the storm, torn, hurled from the brink into the awful chasm below? They are the blackened remains of the children of ingratitude. Do you feel the restoration of the healing calm, and see the rifts that show the heavenly blue of the eternal sky? It is blessing, forgiving, sacred love, that behind all encircles the rolling world.







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